

What Parents Face Today

Talk: Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

I was in California once where I happened to meet a senior Indian immigrant. We got talking about education. I remarked that it was the age of education and that the greatest need of our generation was to be educated to the highest standard possible. But my companion expressed disappointment at the effect such education was having on youngsters. He said he had come to the conclusion that what we needed was de-learning!

Could parents have something to do with education going off track? For parents, there were only two options: either accept whatever was going to become of their children or try to understand them and address their minds in such a way that what they, as parents, required of them was made clear to them.

The fact is that in our present society the majority of parents are traditional in their outlook, but they want to educate their offspring in modern educational institutions. This requires an optimal blending of the old and new. But there tends to be confusion in this regard and parents often end up arguing with children with the result that children begin to resist education.

It is not so much a question of de-learning as a question of self-training. If parents want to bring about a change of attitude towards learning in their children, they must prepare themselves to be good counsellors. There is a great deal of lack of parental counselling.

Another problem is pampering. Parents have great affection for their children and this often leads to their pampering them. While affection is good, pampering is bad. Children become easy-going and that is the worst thing that can happen. They become fussy and refuse to heed advice. They know nothing but

their own desires. Harsh realities have no place in their dictionary. It is for this reason that pampered children cannot meet the challenges they have to face in the external world.

Once I met two Indian boys, both graduates, who said that they found themselves in difficult circumstances. When they were at home, they were living under the protection of their parents, who were always ready to provide anything they wanted. But now that they had left their homes and wanted to find a place in the external world, they felt unloved and unwanted. Their homes had been ready to give them everything free of cost, but now they found that the external world was quite different. Here everything had a price

in terms of hard work, adjustment, acceptance of reality, proving their ability, and making compromises. They found that at home they had not been trained to meet such challenges.

Indulgent parents can do grave potential harm to their children. They end up "making" their children unfit, like unwanted products in the marketplace. Parents must understand that their children need double education – professional education as well as spiritual training. The former can be had in educational institutions but the centre for the latter is the home. And parents are teachers at home. However, the language of dos and don'ts will not serve the purpose. Parents will have to prepare themselves for a more sensitive and complex approach. Indeed, they must ground themselves in what may be called rational spirituality.

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